# Berardi AC

### Framework

#### Our ability to make progressive change relies on the ability for labor to organize a collective recomposition of society. Information is at the root of recomposition and is either harnessed by workers or employed against them by Semiocapitalism

Berardi 11 [(Franco Berardi, Italian philosopher and activist) “After the Future,” 2011, <https://libcom.org/files/AfterFuture.pdf>] ZS

I define recombination [is] the technical form of the labor process in the digital environment, whilst the word recomposition means the social and cultural process enabling the fragments of labor to become conscious subjectivity. My central thesis is the following: the recombinant form of the labor process has changed the very foundation of the conflictual nature of labor, and has displaced the social landscape in such a way that any social conscious recomposition seems impossible. We can start with the political side of the problem. During the last two decades the defeat of the left around the world has often been explained by the crumbling of socialist states, and the subsequent dissolution of the communist parties. But I think that the reason for the social and political defeat has to be found in the change in labor organization, and in the cultural mutation produced by the media colonization of the social mind. The fragmentation of the political left has been a problem, perhaps, during the last decades, and the defeat of the leftist parties in the national elections in Europe has been a symptom of this crisis. But I think that the basic problem for the progressive movement is the cultural inability to start a process of social recomposition of labor. Social composition is the cultural process of unification of the social body through the fusion of imaginary and cultural flows. The concept of composition originally comes from the field of chemical science, not from the political lexicon. In the process of social composition it is possible to find the material genesis of solidarity and lack of it. The concept of composition has been elaborated in the neo-Marxist Italian theoretical landscape of the 1960s and 1970s (Tronti, Bologna, Negri…), in opposition to the dogmatic vision of the prevailing Hegelian historicism of the Italian Communist Party. In the parlance of the Italian workerist school, the root of the autonomy of the working class, the ability to organize against exploitation, is to be found in the fusion of the cultural components of the social fabric. Myth, ideology, media, advertising; these forces are producing effects in the composition of society. They can produce effects of recomposition, when the different segments of social labor find a common ground of sensibility and of understanding, and stand united against the exploiters. They can produce effects of decomposition, when the technological and ideological capitalist action destroys the feeling of friendship, the institutions of labor organization, and the sympathy of society for itself. During the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, world society underwent a process of internal recomposition and this made possible the autonomy of the workers’ movement from the domination of capital. Then, after the victory of Thatcher and Reagan, capital’s counteroffensive smashed the organized force of labor, decentralized the factories, invaded the social brain with corporate media flows, and finally reduced the international cycle of labor to an infinite ocean of micro-fragments of nervous connection. The notion of composition is very close to the Guattarian concept of subjectivation. In his books Guattari says that we should not speak of a subject, in the old Hegelo-dialectical way. The subject is not there from the beginning, as an ideal force, able to fight and to win. There are not subjects, in history, there are women, and men, poor, frail organisms trying to escape misery and death. There are conscious and sensitive organisms expressing desire and creating rhizomes. The social molecules may find a way of common understanding and common sensibility and may act like a subject, if they are able to share the same refrain, as Guattari would say

#### Digitalized labor requires uniform compliance with Semiocapitalist structures. Workers are reduced to an easily replaceable unit of time; their dehumanization and lack of commonality renders organization, and therefore recombination, impossible

Berardi 11 [(Franco Berardi, Italian philosopher and activist) “After the Future,” 2011, https://libcom.org/files/AfterFuture.pdf] ZS

Precarity refers not only to the deregulation of the labor market and the fragmentation of work, but also the dissolution of community. A continuous flow of info-labor runs in the global network, and it is the general factor of capital valorization, but this flow is not able to subjectivize, to coagulate in the conscious action of the collective body. This is why the labor force has apparently become un-recomposable. Solidarity between the workers of the world was the main basis of democracy during the past century, and the only guarantee of workers’ human rights; it no longer exists, having been destroyed by the new division and fragmentation of recombinant labor. Migrants, precarious workers, cognitive workers: they share the same condition of weakness, in different degrees. But [workers] are unable to find a common ground of solidarity and struggle. This apparent un-recomposability of labor is the effect of the digitalization of the process of production, and of the subsequent fractalization and precarization of labor. In the global digital network, labor is transformed in small parcels of nervous energy picked up by the recombining machine. In this sense I would say that it is fractalized, and recombined by the techno-financial network. The workers are deprived of every individual consistency. Strictly speaking the workers no longer exist. Their time exists, their time is there, permanently available to connect, to produce in exchange for a temporary salary. Marx’s prophecy about the “atom of time” is fulfilled. In the process of networked production we no longer find working persons, but abstract, depersonalized, fractal atoms of time available in the Net-sphere. This is why the labor force has become un-recomposable, unable to recognize itself as a community of sensible and sensitive beings who share the same social interests and the same cultural expectations. Is the recomposition process (that we may label a process of collective subjectivation) still possible in this new condition? The productive force of cognitive labor has been multiplied by the creation of the recombinant network. The “general intellect” to which Marx refers in the Grundrisse is the ability of knowledge to act as a value producing force. Thanks to the introduction of digital machines capital has incorporated the product of the general brain in its system of machines. But the living process of knowledge still resides in the mind of the individual scientist and technician. In the digital network we are dealing with a different reality: the living brains of individuals are absorbed (subsumed) inside the process of network production and submitted to a system of techno-linguistic automatisms. Recombination is the (informational and biopolitical) technique that transforms the activity of individual brains in an abstract productive continuum. The individual brain can act effectively only through the recombinant modality: functional recombination of fragments of cognitive labor scattered in time and space, but functionally unified inside the Net. Interoperability is the general goal of the network, and in order to connect, the recombinant fragments of living labor time have to become compatible: The core problem of getting computers to communicate with each other is, by definition, one of compatibility. As the network grows bigger, incompatibilities must be overcome… if an incompatibility emerges, it produces a trigger for change requiring new technical and social negotiations. Generally however a new protocol or level is introduced that, by operating between or on top of different layers, will allow them all to coexist under a single common framework. (Terranova 2004: 58-9) De-singularization of living thought and activity is mandatory for access to the network. In the global network there are not working persons, but an infinite brain-sprawl, an ever-changing mosaic of fractal cells of available nervous energy. The person is nothing but the residue – therefore precarious – of the process of valorization. From the point of view of subjectivation, the productive and functional potency of cognitive labor, its interoperability, seems to be inversely proportional to its social and political recomposability. The collective brain is functionally recombined in the sphere of the Net. But at the social and affective level the social brain appears unable to recompose, to find common strategies of behavior, incapable of common narration and of solidarity. Therefore, the expansion of the productive potency of the general intellect coincides with a schizoid fragmentation of the collective brain, incapable of recomposing as conscious subjectivity, unable to act in a conscious collective way. During modernity, the industrial labor force was composed by persons, bearers of individual ability to perform tasks, and also bearers of physical needs, and political rights, like the right to unionize, negotiate, and strike. Today, the labor force can be described as a sprawl of nervous energy, of depersonalized time available to cellular recombination. This time has been fractalized and compatibilized and so made recombinable. In order to inter-operate the individual mind has to become a cell of the networked mind, a compatible fractal: this implies a technological mutation but also a psychic mutation of the living mind.

#### The structure of Semiocapitalism drives all action and prevents recomposition. Society’s inability to recompose means that people cannot be actors; they don’t have the ability to make change

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I speak of agency, of a collective actor, of singularity in the Guattarian sense, and, finally, I speak of “movement”. Movement is the process of recomposition of society: the cultural process that makes possible the political unity of the different social actors who are in conflict in public space. When the social actors find a common ground of understanding and act together for a common goal, [we] see a movement, the active and conscious side of the process of social transformation, and also of cultural evolution. Movement is the subjective (conscious and collective) side of the recomposition of the living social sphere against the domination of the dead (capital). [From] the end of the [decade of two-thousand], for the first time in my life I have been obliged to recognize that the actor is absent: you see actions, but you don’t see an actor. Actions without an actor are played in the ground of social visibility but they do not create any common ground in the space of consciousness and affectivity. Actions are performed on the theatre of social production, but the agent of recombination is not there, in the theatre, but backstage, and the consciousness of the process does not belong to the process itself. Human beings perform productive actions, but they are not conscious actors of what they are doing, and seem unable to join their feelings and thought in a common space of consciousness. Capitalism has destroyed the conditions of recomposition, and society has become un-recomposable. The noncomposability of society means that the process of subjectivation cannot take place. This is why the future has lost its zest, and people have lost all trust in it, because the future no more appears as the object of a choice, and of collective conscious action, but is a kind of unavoidable catastrophe that we cannot oppose in any way

#### Thus, the role of the ballot is to vote for the debater who best resists semiocapitalism. Prefer for three reasons:

#### 1) Capitalist digitilization skews our concept of time and renders previous conceptions of progressive change meaningless. The only coherent evaluation of the past or the future must be first achieved through dismantling semiocapitalism

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My point of view has been shaped by two centuries of progressive enlightened history: it is the point of view of an epoch and of a generation that has been always convinced of being the bearer of the fulfillment of the modern promise. But this means that I have a problem of imagination as far as the past and the future are concerned. The way I imagine and narrate time is connected to the way history has developed during the last two centuries. But the digital mutation, coupled with neoliberal ideology, has completely reframed the perception of time, and the relationship between human beings and their social environment. We can no longer think the flow of collective time in a frame of progressive becoming. Of course, I see very well that the progressive process has came to a halt in the age of capitalist counteroffensive and media colonization; but, I can’t stop perceiving this as a temporary halt; I can’t stop thinking that my energies (political and cultural energies) have to be dedicated entirely to going beyond and bringing back the old progressive rhythm of history, restoring the order of civilization that I have considered eternal in the years of my cultural formation. This attitude is blinding and misleading me, and it is preventing me from understanding what is really going on in the deep structure of the social imagination. The progressive perception of historical time is a prejudice, and this prejudice is putting me on the wrong path, giving me the false impression that something can be done in order to go back to the past history of civilization. Nothing can be done, on the contrary, because the periodization that I have in mind has to be reframed. The progressive ideology was based on the idealistic premise that the history of mankind is essentially the history of the progressive realization of Reason. Now we are facing a reality that has nothing to do with the rationalization of Reason, and also has nothing to do with an evolutionary progressive vision. Evolution is not progressive. The progressive vision is based on the idea that evolution is human-oriented. Evolution is not human-oriented. Present evolution has gone beyond the limits of a human-oriented civilization because the limits of human knowability and controllability have been surpassed.

#### 2) Liberal democracy has failed- any conception of change must be spearheaded with combatting semiocapitalism; dismantling semiocapitalism is a prerequisite to making change

Berardi 09 [(Franco Berardi, Italian philosopher and activist) “Precarious Rhapsody”, 2015, https://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/PrecariousRhapsodyWeb.pdf] ZS

It’s a strange word, that with which we identify the ideology prevalent in the post-human transition to digital slavery: liberalism. Liberty is its foundational myth, but the liberty of whom? The liberty of capital, certainly. Capital must be absolutely free to expand in every corner of the world to find the fragment of human time available to be exploited for the most miserable wage. But liberalism also predicates the liberty of the person. The juridical person is free to express itself, to choose its representatives, to be entrepreneurial at the level of politics and the economy. Very interesting. Only the person has disappeared. What is left is like an inert object, irrelevant and useless. The person is free, sure. But his time is enslaved. His liberty is a juridical fiction to which nothing in concrete daily life corresponds. If we consider the conditions in which the work of the majority of humanity, proletariat and cognitariat, is actually carried out in our time, if we examine the conditions the average wage globally, if we consider the current and now largely realized cancellation of previous labor rights, we can say with no rhetorical exaggeration that we live in a regime of slavery. The average salary on the global level is hardly sufficient to buy the indispensable means for the mere survival of a person whose time is at the service of capital. And people do not have any right over the time of which they are formally the proprietors, but effectively expropriated. That time does not really belong to them, because it is separated from the social existence of the people who make it available to the recombinative cyber-productive circuit. The time of work is fractalized, that is, reduced to minimal fragments that can be reassembled, and the fractalization makes it possible for capital to constantly find the conditions of minimum salary. How can we oppose the decimation of the working class and its systemic depersonalization, the slavery that is affirmed as a mode of command of precarious and depersonalized work? This is the question that is posed with insistence by whoever still has a sense of human dignity. Nevertheless the answer does not come out because the form of resistance and of struggle that were efficacious in the twentieth century no longer appear to have the capacity to spread and consolidate themselves, nor consequently can they stop the absolutism of capital. An experience that derives from workers’ struggle in recent years is that the struggle of precarious workers does not make a cycle. Fractalized work can also punctually rebel, but this does not set into motion any wave of struggle. The reason is easy to understand. In order for struggles to form a cycle there must be a spatial proximity of the bodies of labor and an existential temporal continuity. Without this proximity and this continuity, we lack the conditions for the cellularized bodies to become community. No wave can be created, because the workers do not share their existence in time, and behaviors can only become a wave when there is a continuous proximity in time that info-labor no longer allows.

#### 3) Semiocapitalism has destroyed the education system and pedagogical spaces like debate are uniquely equipped to combatting semiocapitalism’s grasp on learning and information. Behind all published works is a profit motive.

Carlin and Wallin 14 [(Matthew Carlin, Jason Wallin) “Deleuze & Guattari, Politics and Education,” 2014, <http://library.lol/main/B95AF4DD96021A8707306FC61F68FF66>] ZS

Education is under attack. The privatization of the educational system has been one of the tenets of the neo-liberal counter-revolution during the past thirty years. In the wake of the financial crisis in the West and the concomitant calls for ‘austerity’, cuts to public funding have had a profound effect on cultural institutions, on all levels of schooling, and on all forms of university and scientific research. This has been particularly noticeable in Europe, where the privatization of the education system is a relatively new phenomenon in comparison to the United States. The effect of this process of financialization and privatization is easy to predict: growing ignorance, violence, misery and precarity. The destruction of the educational system, converging with the acceleration of the Infosphere and the growing complexity of the semiotic environment, is one of the main features of the contemporary spasm. The protests of students and teachers in defence of public education systems (particularly in Europe) are not enough. New educational institutions have to be conceived and built as chaoids, healers of the spasmodic mind and the spasmodic body of society. The modern educational process has been conceived as a process of critical transmission of knowledge. Because of the spasmodic condition of the social brain, the mind-format of teaching is diverging from the mind-format of the learner. As a result, the formal educational process is less and less effective in transmitting knowledge. The transmission of knowledge is becoming more and more dysfunctional and empty. The mind-format of the connective generation is scarcely interacting (or not interacting at all) with the mind-format of the alphabetical generation. The spreading phenomenon of ‘attention deficit disorder’ is only one of the many examples and aspects of the decreasing functionality of educational systems in the present transition that is marked by the spasm. In the connective sphere of techno-communication, mental energy is incorporated into the semiocapital process of production. This incorporation implies a standardization and formatting of the cognitive body. Bodily meaning and meaningful bodies become an impossibility as a result of the formatting process. A decisive step in this process of subsumption of nervous energy and intellectual work by the techno-financial articulations of semiocapital is the destruction of the modern institution of the university, and the building of a recombinant system of knowledge exploitation that demands the cancellation of knowledge autonomy while reducing the learning process to a mere acquisition of operational skills. Autonomy was crucial in the conception and purpose of the modern university. Autonomy was not only independence from academic institutions, but the methodologies of scientific research and artistic practice as well. In the humanistic sphere of modern bourgeois civilization, each field of knowledge was expected to autonomously establish its own laws: conventions, aims, procedures, forms of verification and change. Consistently the university was based on two pillars: the first was the relation of the intellectuals to the city (i.e. the ethical and political role of reason and of research); and the second was the autonomy of research, teaching, discovery, innovation, and the production and transmission of moral, scientific and technical acquisitions. The entrepreneurial bourgeois owner was strongly linked to the territory of his properties. He was also interested in the development of these properties, and knew that the autonomy of knowledge was necessary for achieving productive results. The long process of emancipation from theocratic dogma deeply influenced bourgeois culture and identity throughout modern times. The financialization of the economy in the post-bourgeois era has led to the de-localization of work and information. The main trend of this transformation has been the formation of the homo oeconomicus (Michel Foucault, 2010) in which every act and thought has been translated into economic terms. This transition implies the abolition of the autonomy of knowledge, as the semio- capitalist economy gets hold of every space of social life. Economics, which is now more a technology for the crystallization of time into capital than a science, has progressively assumed the central place in the system of knowledge and research. Every act of research, of teaching, of learning, and of inventing is subjected to the following questions: Is it sellable? Is it profitable? Is it helping capital accumulation? Is it meeting the demands of corporate finance? Those who do not recognize the primacy of the economic principle in the field of education, or those who refuse to worship the central dogma of the neo-liberal church by condemning the rules of competition, profitability and compatibility, are labelled as sceptics, non-believers, atheists and communists. The fate that awaits such miscreants is marginalization and expulsion. The educational chaoide that we need is a sceptical institution for the re-activation of autonomy of knowledge from economic dogma.

### Contention

#### I affirm the resolution Resolved: a just government ought to recognize an unconditional right of workers to strike. A just government is definitionally one that is not semiocapitalist, and affording workers an unconditional right to strike is crucial to allow for any form of recombination of society

#### History proves- strong labor unions in the 20th century were the forefront of change and resistance to oppressive forces. In our current semiocapitalist economy, recognizing the unconditional right of strike rectifies this difference and puts power back in the hands of workers

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In the 1970s, the energy crisis, the consequent economic recession and finally the substitution of work with numerical machines resulted in the formation of a large number of people with no guarantees. Since then the question of precariousness has become central to social analysis, but also in the ambitions of the movement. We began by proposing to struggle for forms of guaranteed income uncoupled from work, in order to face the fact that a large part of the young population had no prospect of guaranteed employment. The situation has changed since then, because what seemed a marginal and temporary condition has now become the prevalent form of labor relations. Precariousness is no longer a marginal and provisional characteristic, but it is the general form of the labor relation in a productive, digitalized sphere, reticular and recombinative. The word ‘precariat’ generally stands for the area of work that is no longer definable by fixed rules relative to the labor relation, to salary and to the length of the working day. However if we analyze the past we see that these rules functioned only for a limited period in the history of relations between labor and capital. Only for a short period at the heart of the twentieth century, under the political pressures of unions and workers, in conditions of (almost) full employment and thanks to a more or less strongly regulatory role of the state in the economy, some limits to the natural violence of capitalist dynamics could be legally established. The legal obligations that in certain periods have protected society from the violence of capital were always founded on the existence of a relation of a force of a political and material kind (workers’ violence against the violence of capital). Thanks to political force it became possible to affirm rights, establish laws and protect them as personal rights. With the decline in the political force of the workers’ movement, the natural precariousness of labor relations in capitalism, and its brutality, have reemerged. The new phenomenon is not the precarious character of the job market, but the technical and cultural conditions in which info-labor is made precarious. The technical conditions are those of digital recombination of info-work in networks. The cultural conditions are those of the education of the masses and the expectations of consumption inherited from late twentieth century society and continuously fed by the entire apparatus of marketing and media communication. If we analyze the first aspect, i.e. the technical transformations introduced by the digitalization of the productive cycle, we see that the essential point is not the becoming precarious of the labor relation (which, after all, has always been precarious), but the dissolution of the person as active productive agent, as labor power. We have to look at the cyberspace of global production as an immense expanse of depersonalized human time. Info-labor, the provision of time for the elaboration and the recombination of segments of info-commodities, is the extreme point of arrival of the process of the abstraction from concrete activities that Marx analyzed as a tendency inscribed in the capital-labor relation. The process of abstraction of labor has progressively stripped labor time of every concrete and individual particularity. The atom of time of which Marx speaks is the minimal unit of productive labor. But in industrial production, abstract labor time was impersonated by a physical and juridical bearer, embodied in a worker in flesh and bone, with a certified and political identity. Naturally capital did not purchase a personal disposition, but the time for which the workers were its bearers. But if capital wanted to dispose of the necessary time for its valorization, it was indispensable to hire a human being, to buy all of its time, and therefore needed to face up to the material needs and trade union and political demands of which the human was a bearer. When we move into the sphere of info-labor there is no longer a need to have bought a person for eight hours a day indefinitely. Capital no longer recruits people, but buys packets of time, separated from their interchangeable and occasional bearers. Depersonalized time has become the real agent of the process of valorization, and depersonalized time has no rights, nor any demands. It can only be either available or unavailable, but the alternative is purely theoretical because the physical body despite not being a legally recognized person still has to buy food and pay rent. The informatic procedures of the recombination of semiotic material have the effect of liquefying the objective time necessary to produce the info-commodity. The human machine is there, pulsating and available, like a brain-sprawl in waiting. The extension of time is meticulously cellularized: cells of productive time can be mobilized in punctual, casual and fragmentary forms. The recombination of these fragments is automatically realized in the network. The mobile phone is the tool that makes possible the connection between the needs of semio-capital and the mobilization of the living labor of cyberspace. The ringtone of the mobile phone calls the workers to reconnect their abstract time to the reticular flux.

### Underview

#### Extinction first fails:

#### 1) Extinction first freezes actions- if any small chance of leading to extinction is something that must be addressed, we’ll be stuck jumping between preventing irrelevant scenarios and fail to actually do anything

#### 2) Extinction first is circular and turns itself- Focusing on preventing extinction fails to recognize that our prevention of extinction could actually trigger extinction in itself. We can’t know whether our prevention of one extinction scenario will inevitably cause another

#### Util fails:

#### 1) True aggregation of pleasure and pain is impossible because a) that would require quantifying pleasure and pain chemicals in the brain b) Pain and pleasure are inherently subjective c) weighing between different kinds of pain, i.e. dehumanization and physical pain, is incoherent